

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #39

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, July 26 for a 36-hour period. For the week ending July 21, the Bering River District survey count was 9,900 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 14,400 sockeye salmon. During this survey, observational conditions for Bering River District systems were fair. Another survey of the Bering River District is anticipated to be flown next week.

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, July 26 for a 36-hour period. The cumulative sonar count to date is 1,279,419 fish whereas the minimum anticipated count to date is 640,783 fish. The preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that closed on Tuesday, July 24 is 6,700 sockeye salmon with 69 deliveries reported. This compares to an anticipated harvest 24,300 sockeye salmon for this period. The Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon harvest contribution from the fishing period that closed on July 14 was 39%. For the week ending July 21, the Copper River Delta survey count was 44,100 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 32,100 sockeye salmon. During this survey observational conditions on the Copper River Delta were fair. An aerial survey of the Copper River Delta is anticipated to be flown next week.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open for an 84-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 26. This will be the final drift gillnet fishing period in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict for the season. The drift gillnet fishing season closes by regulation in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict on July 30. The western boundary of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is defined by lines from 60° 20.00' N., 147° 26.59' W. to 60° 14.75' N., 147° 35.35' W. to 60° 02.50' N., 147° 44.41' W. Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect. Harvest for the period that closed on Sunday, July 22 was 1,400 chum salmon and 300 pink salmon with 6 deliveries reported.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District within College Fiord, north of a latitude line at 61°00.45'N (Pt. Pakenham), will open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET AND PURSE SEINE harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 6:00 a.m. Thursday, July 26. Effective from 6:00 a.m., Thursday, July 26 to 8:00 p.m., July 27, regulatory closed waters pertaining to the Coghill River, as specified in 5 AAC 24.350(6)(B)), will not be in effect. Commercial fishing will not be permitted within the bed or channel of the Coghill River at any stage of the tide. **To maximize sockeye salmon commercial harvest potential and minimize additional escapement to the Coghill River, purse seine gear is being allowed north of Pt. Pakenham.**

The Esther Subdistrict is closed. PWSAC anticipates beginning pink salmon cost recovery harvest on Thursday, July 26.

A total of 2,370 sockeye salmon were passed at the Coghill River weir yesterday, and approximately 1,500 sockeye salmon were observed below the weir this morning. Cumulative passage is 66,598 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 18,286 sockeye salmon for this date. Harvest reporting from the Coghill District is incomplete at this time. ADF&G pink salmon otolith contribution estimates are now available for the Coghill District commercial fishing period that ended on July 18. Preliminary estimates result in a harvest composition of 44% hatchery and 56% wild stock pink salmon, with a wild stock harvest estimate of approximately 19,700 fish. Of the estimated 15,700 hatchery pink salmon harvested for this period, 100% originated from VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery. PWSAC's WNH SHA chum salmon estimates for July 25 are as follows: 35,000 to 50,000 inside the barrier net and 10,000 to 12,000 fish in the fishway.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District **within the Main Bay Subdistrict and MBH THA and SHA, excluding the AGZ**, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 48-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 26. The AGZ up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period. Harvest from the period that closed Saturday, July 21 was 350 chum, 9,900 sockeye, and 4,500 pink salmon with 87 deliveries reported. ADF&G otolith contribution estimates are now available for the Eshamy District commercial fishing

period that ended on July 17. Preliminary estimates result in a harvest composition of 24% hatchery and 76% wild stock pink salmon, with a wild stock harvest estimate of approximately 6,600 fish. Of the estimated 2,100 hatchery pink salmon harvested for this period, 100% originated from VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District is closed to commercial fishing.

SEINE FISHERIES: Aerial surveys of the Eastern, Northern, Unakwik, Coghill, Northwestern, Eshamy and Southeastern districts and portions of the Southwestern and Montague districts were flown last week. An aerial survey of the Northern, Unakwik, Coghill, Northwestern, Eshamy districts was flown yesterday. An aerial survey of the Eastern and Southeastern districts will be flown today. An aerial survey of the Southwestern and Montague districts is scheduled for the coming week. Early season indicators of wild stock chum and pink salmon escapement in these districts are behind anticipated numbers and therefore do not support a wild stock fishery at this time. VFDA completed cost recovery fishing on Wednesday, July 11. VFDA estimates at least 300,000 pink salmon secured for broodstock near the Solomon Gulch Hatchery. VFDA's broodstock needs are approximately 346,000 pink salmon.

PWSAC will begin its pink salmon cost recovery program at AFK, CCH, and WNH on Thursday, July 26. Future CPF openings targeting PWSAC enhanced pink salmon will be determined by cost recovery fishing progress and run entry. Test fishing in the Southwestern District began on July 23, gauging pink salmon run entry and stock composition. The maximum set size per sample location has ranged from 150 – 200 pink salmon. Stock contribution estimates from Tuesday, July 24 were 74% hatchery stock origin (SGH= 11%, CCH= 16%, WNH= 20%, and AFK hatchery = 27%) and 26% wild stock origin. Samples of pink salmon caught on July 24 resulted in an estimated 31% female, with a total sample size of 96 fish.

The preliminary CPF harvest estimate from the 14-hour period in the Eastern District on Tuesday, July 24 is 50 sockeye, 1 coho, 122,000 pink and 500 chum salmon with 79 deliveries reported. Cumulative pink salmon harvest in the Eastern District through July 24 is approximately 973,800 fish for cost recovery and approximately 9.5 million fish for common property fisheries. ADF&G sampling of CPF harvest from Jack Bay on July 22 resulted in an estimate of 75% female.

EASTERN DISTRICT: The Eastern District is closed to commercial fishing. Waters of Port Valdez are being closed to allow for continued run entry to meet VFDA's pink salmon broodstock needs.

NORTHERN DISTRICT: The Northern District is closed to commercial fishing.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: On the east side of Knight Island, the waters of Marsha Bay, west of 147° 39.75' W. long., will open to commercial purse seine fishing for an 84-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 26. Anadromous stream closures within Marsha Bay will not be in effect until further notice. No harvest has been reported for Marsha Bay in recent fishing periods.

The waters of Sawmill Bay, including the AFK Hatchery Terminal Harvest Area (THA) and Special Harvest Area (SHA), inside of the newly defined THA line from 60° 03.66' N. lat., 147° 59.11' W. long. to 60° 02.77' N. lat., 148° 01.00' W. long. to 60° 02.76' N. lat., 148° 01.66' W. long. **will close to commercial fishing at 8:00 pm, Wednesday, July 25.** PWSAC will begin its pink salmon cost recovery program at AFK, CCH, and WNH on Thursday, July 26. Future CPF openings targeting PWSAC enhanced pink salmon will be determined by cost recovery fishing progress and run entry, and will be announced at a later date.

As a reminder, **all salmon that are harvested but not sold by commercial permit holders in Alaska waters must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of landing** (5AAC 39.130(c)(10)). Fish tickets have a "not sold/personal use" field to report these salmon.

The next scheduled PURSE SEINE salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 28. The next scheduled GILLNET salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 28. Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time inseason either establishing an additional period or extending an open period.

Announcement recordings are available for **gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure that they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does **not** exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.
- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel, but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized. **All** MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.

Please reference http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species). Under the ESA, take means to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” 16U.S.C. 1532(19); and harass means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NMFS at 907-271-5006.